

Message Text

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ORIGIN OES-07

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TO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: TOCY, EG, SU, SA

SUBJECT: R/V MELVILLE CLEARANCE REQUEST, 1 JUNE - 4 JULY
1978

1. R/V MELVILLE, A PRIVATE VESSEL OPERATED BY SCRIPPS
INSTITUTION OF OCEANOGRAPHY AND FUNDED BY THE NATIONAL
SCIENCE FOUNDATION, IS PLANNING TO CONDUCT MARINE SCI-
ENTIFIC RESEARCH IN THE RED SEA. THE PURPOSE OF THE
RESEARCH IS TO STUDY THE GEOLOGICAL AND GEOPHYSICAL
STRUCTURE OF THE RED SEA IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND THE
HISTORY OF THE FORMATION OF THIS REGION.

2. A DEEP TOW (SIDE SCANNING SONAR) STUDY OF TWO AREAS
THAT STRADDLE THE SPREADING AXIS OF THE RED SEA IS
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PLANNED. THERE WILL BE AN INTENSIVE TRANSPONDERNAVIGATED
SURVEY IN SUAKIN DEEP NEAR 19 DEGREES 40' N. SUAKIN DEEP
IS A SECTION OF THE AXIAL TROUGH THAT INTERSECTS A
SEISMICALLY ACTIVE STRIKE-SLIP FRACTURE CALLED THE SUAKIN
TRANSFORM FAULT. IT IS NEAR THE TRANSITION FROM THE
DISCONTINUOUS, SALT-BOUNDED DEEPS OF THE CENTRAL RED SEA
TO THE BROADER CONTINUOUS TROUGH FURTHER SOUTH. THE

AXIAL REGION HAS STEEP-SIDED LATERAL RIDGES THAT MAY BE TILTED FAULT BLOCKS, AND A CENTRAL RIDGE, WHICH COULD BE A VOLCANIC CONSTRUCTION. PONDED FOR ABOUT 10 KM ALONG

BOTH FLANKS OF THE CENTRAL RIDGE ARE SHALLOW POOLS OF WARM (24 DEGREES C) BRINE, GENERALLY LESS THAN 50 M THICK, AND WITH AN UPPER SURFACE AT 2775 M. THESE ARE THE SOUTHERNMOST BRINE POOLS IN THE RED SEA, AND ARE PROBABLY PRIMARY RATHER THAN SECONDARY SPILL-OVERS BECAUSE THEY ARE SO REMOTE FROM ANY OTHERS. NEAR-BOTTOM OBSERVATIONS IN SUAKIN DEEP WILL BE COMPLEMENTED BY A LIMITED SAMPLING PROGRAM, USING DREDGES TO COLLECT IGNEOUS ROCK, PISTON CORES FOR METALLIFEROUS SEDIMENTS, AND BOTTLES FOR WATER SAMPLES. IN ADDITION TO THIS MAJOR SURVEY, A BRIEFER DEEP-TOW LOWERING INTO ATLANTIS II DEEP WILL BE CONDUCTED. THIS IS THE MOST EXTREME AND BEST-STUDIED OF THE BRINE POOLS, WHERE THE BOTTOM WATER ENVIRONMENT IS TOO HOSTILE FOR CONTINUOUS OPERATION OF THE DEEP TWO VEHICLE. THERE MAY BE AN ANCILLARY PROGRAM OF HEAT-FLOW MEASUREMENT.

3. EQUIPMENT TO BE USED WILL INCLUDE THE DEEP TWO ARRAY, PISTON CORES, DREDGES, AND NANSEN BOTTLES.

4. THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS ARE DRS. KENNETH MACDONALD AND PETER LONSDALE, BOTH OF SCRIPPS. BERTHS ARE AVAILABLE FOR TWO PARTICIPANTS FROM EGYPT, SUDAN, AND UNCLASSIFIED

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SAUDI ARABIA, BUT MAY BE LIMITED TO THE PORTION OF RESEARCH CONDUCTED OFF THE PARTICIPANT'S COAST IF BERTHS ARE SCARCE. ALL DATA RESULTS WILL BE FREELY SHARED.

5. SHIP'S CAPTAIN IS ALAN PHINNEY WITH A CREW OF 20 AND SCIENTIFIC PARTY OF 25. MELVILLE IS 1806 GROSS TONS, 245 FT. LONG, AND HAS A 16 FT. DRAFT. RADIO CALL SIGN IS WECB AND SHIP MONITORS 2182 KHZ AND VHF CHANNEL 16.

6. A SHIP'S TRACK AND STATION LOCATION CHARTS ARE BEING POUCHED. ITINERARY IS AS FOLLOWS:

DEPART MAURITIUS 1 JUNE
ARRIVE PORT SAID 4 JULY

A BRIEF CALL AT JIDDA IS POSSIBLE ON ABOUT 15 JUNE. PORT CALLS WILL BE ARRANGED BY SHIP'S AGENTS.

7. ACTION: EMBASSIES ARE REQUESTED TO SEEK CLEARANCE FOR R/V MELVILLE TO CONDUCT CONTINENTAL SHELF RESEARCH OFF THE COASTS OF EGYPT, SUDAN, AND SAUDI ARABIA DURING THE PERIOD 1 JUNE - 4 JULY 1978. VANCE

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